NOAA's National Weather Service

Our Concern—Our Employees Safety and Environment At Work & Home Newsletter

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Introducing The NWS ES&H Newsletter

Welcome to the National Weather Service first quarterly Environmental Safety & Health (ES&H) newsletter. Our agency is dedicated to promoting safety for all it's employees, both at work and at home. Additionally, we are proud to be a part of protecting our environment and abiding all environmental laws that this country has regulated.

In this first issue, we will discuss autumn safety, ergonomics, and our recent NOAA Tier 1 office visits. We encourage everyone in the NWS to help become apart our effort to provide the best newsletter possible for our employees.

All are encouraged to provide suggestions for new articles, provide comments on the contents of the newsletter, or even submit a safety article or safety tip. We even encourage employees to submit any lessons learned from their current or past experiences.

Autumn Safety

The autumn represents the time of year where the weather transitions from warm temperatures slowly to the first winter cold outbreak. It is time where all of us prepare our homes for the winter. Autumn is the time where we find ourselves raking leaves and cleaning them from gutters. It's the time when our furnaces are used for the first time in months.

The safety hazards associated with the fall are numerous, so here's a few Fall safety tips:

Space heaters cause fires!

1) Keep flammable materials or things that burn 3 feet away.
2) Supervise small children when in use
3) Use the correct wattage extension cord
4) Operate according to manufacturers recommendation

Source: Underwriters Laboratories

Fact—94 % of homes in the US have at least one smoke alarm.
30 % of reported fires in homes the smoke alarm didn't work.

On Sunday October 30th most Americans will turn their clocks back. During the changes in time it is recommended that you change your fire alarm's batteries and test them.

Smoke Alarms—A Must For Every Homes

1) At least one smoke alarm on every floor of your home
2) Alarms should be mounted high on walls and ceilings
3) They should not be installed near a window
4) A good cleaning helps to eliminate dust that collects on them
5) Remember to change batteries in all smoke alarms twice a year.

Source: Underwriters Laboratories

Helpful Hint - Wet Leaves on roadways make for slick spots that can cause a vehicle to slide as if it's on ice.

Cleaning your gutters? Ladder injuries increase in the fall.

1) Use the right Ladder for the job.
2) Always inspect before use
3) For every 4 feet of the ladder's length come out 1 ft from the wall
4) Metal ladder + electricity = death
5) Never overreach!

Halloween has the highest pedestrian death toll for children

1) Use makeup instead of masks
2) Wear reflective tape or flashing buttons
3) Use a flashlight
4) If driving—pay extra attention

Source: Underwriters Laboratories

Chimney Maintenance Vital To Safety

Chimney fires can be your worse enemy. As the popularity of heating with wood continues to grow, so does the rate of house fires. Chimneys fall into two categories ; site-built (masonry) and factory-built (metal) Properly made, installed, and maintained, either type will provide many years of service.

Any chimney should be thoroughly cleaned at least once a year. Chimneys that get a lot of use will require more frequent cleanings.

Source: Felton Fire Department

Ergonomics and your competitive edge

Competitive Edge—A well implemented ergonomics program can reduce workplace injuries.

A Management Tool—a state-of-the-art tool for the best possible fit between your employees and the work they do.

A Team Effort—Ergonomics can be the starting point for employee involvement in a program, creating higher

Ergonomics

Ergonomics is the science of fitting workplace conditions and job demands to the capabilities of the working population. Effective and successful "fits" assure high productivity, avoidance of illness and injury risks, and increased satisfaction among the workforce.

Ergonomics is a team effort that is best affected when employees have an open dialogue with their supervisors. Most supervisors may not be aware that certain work related activities are causing an employee discomfort. Once a dialogue has been started the employee and management can work together to come up with a solution that benefits both the employee and the employer.

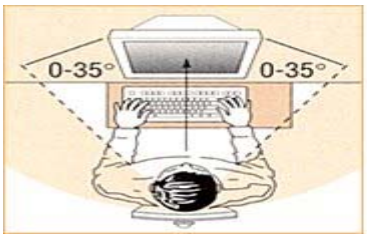
All of us could significantly reduce our risk of injury if we could adhere to the following ergonomic principles:

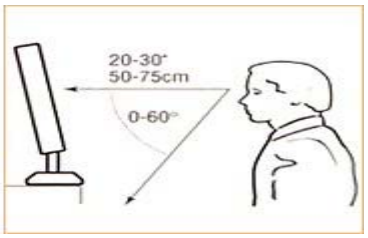
A Formula For Success—The effective application

Evaluating Video Display Terminals

1) **Evaluate the work and workstation**
2) **Consider your options—don't make a decision yet.**
3) **Develop a plan for improving the workstation area**

1) All work activities should permit the worker to adopt several different, but equally healthy and safe postures.
2) Where muscle force has to be exerted it should be done by the largest appropriate muscle groups available.
3) Work activities should be performed with the joints at about mid-point of their range of movement. This applies particularly to the head, trunk, and upper limbs.





Sources: www.alexandertechnique.com/ergonomics.htm
http://www.cdc.gov/niosh

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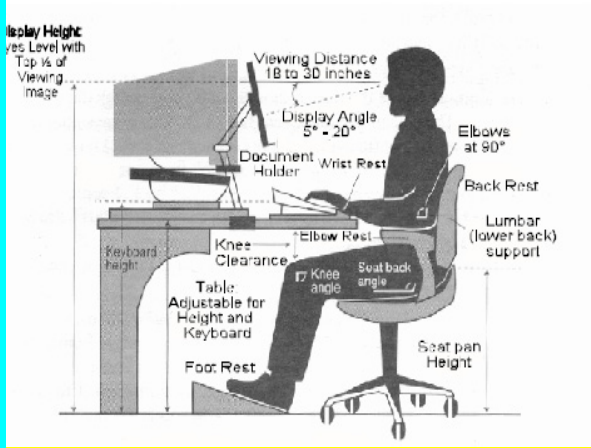
12 Tips For An Ergonomic Computer Workstation

1) Use a good chair with a dynamic chair and sit back.
2) Top of monitor casing 2-3 inches above eye level.
3) No glare on screen.
4) Sit at arms length from monitor.
5) Feet on floor or stable footrest.
6) Use a document holder.
7) Wrists flat and straight in relation to forearms to use keyboards/mouse/input device.
8) Arms and elbows relaxed close to the body.
9) Center monitor and keyboard in front of you
10) Use a negative tilt keyboard tray with an upper mouse platform or downward tiltable platform adjacent to keyboard.
11) Use a stable work surface and stable keyboard tray.
12) Take frequent short breaks.

Figure 1: Typical Ergonomically Designed Workstation



What is Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS)?

The carpal tunnel receives it name from the 8 bones in the wrist, called carpals, that form a tunnellike structure. The tunnel is filled with flexor tendons which control finger movements. Repetitive flexing and extension of the wrist may cause a thickening of the protective sheaths which surround the tendon. The swollen tendons sheaths apply pressure on the median nerve and produce CTS.

5 Tips For Using A Laptop

1) Un-ergonomic Laptops—the basic design of a laptop violates a basic ergonomic design that keyboard and screen be separated.
2) Laptop User Type—Occasional users will have less risk of problems than full-time users.
3) Laptop Posture –Using a laptop is a tradeoff between poor neck/head posture and poor hand/wrist posture. It is better to sacrifice neck posture than wrist posture.
4) Laptop Dimensions—Think about where you will most use your laptop to help you choose the best size screen
5) Laptop Weight—If you are a mobile professional think about the weight of the system.

NOAA's NECSAS Program

This article will discuss results of environmental and safety assessments at NWS facilities this past year. First a little background…

Each year since 1999, NOAA personnel and contractors have visited Line Office facilities to assess their level of compliance with environmental and safety regulations. The NOAA Environmental Compliance and Safety Assessment System (NECSAS) was developed to comply with Executive Orders and provide feedback regarding implementation of environmental and safety programs within the organization. NECSAS defines three levels of assessment: Tier 1; Tier 2; and Tier 3.

Tier 1, the most comprehensive and formal type of assessment, is conducted by a contractor to ensure objectivity. Findings go through two review cycles on NOAA's Web-Hosted Assessment Manager (WHAM) website before they are considered final. Findings are tracked on WHAM until they are resolved.

Tier 2 assessments are a conducted by a NOAA Regional Environmental Compliance Officer (RECO) and NOAA Regional Safety Manager (RSM). Tier 2 findings are also posted to the WHAM website beginning this year, but only go through one review cycle before being considered final. They are also now tracked through resolution on WHAM. There have been a few "bumps in the road" implementing the Tier 2 assessments this year. That issue will be discussed in the next issue of this newsletter.

Tier 3 assessments are loosely defined as any review or assessment that is neither Tier 1 nor Tier 2. There are currently no rules regarding Tier 3 assessments.

Mike Walters—E2M NESCAS Inspector

FY05 NECSAS Findings

The top ten findings were as follows:

1. **Noise monitoring not conducted;
2. Illness/Injury logs not maintained for 5 years;
3. **Eyewash systems missing or inadequate;
4. Waste handling, labeling, and documentation;
5. Electrical disconnects not labeled;
6. Hazardous materials not labeled;
7. MSDS not available;
8. Portable ladders not inspected;
9. Fire extinguishers not inspected/ maintained; and
10. Fire hazard due to excess combustibles.

** These are national issues currently under review at WSH.

Web Resources

http://ergo.human.cornell.edu
http:://www.cdc.gov.niosh
http:://www.alexandertechnique.com/ergonomics.htm
http://www.feltonfire.com/Chimney.html
http://www.ul.com
http://www.dir.ca.gov/dosh/dosh_publications/ergonomic.html
http://esf.uvm.edu

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